

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 HA-05 CU-04 AGRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /091 W

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FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1293

INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

SMISSION GENEVA 0180

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 3240

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGSGC SREF BC

SUBJ: SOWETO SECONDARY SCHOOL REFUGEES: ANNOUNCEMENT OF PLANS
FOR RESIDENTIAL CENTER IN BOTSWANA

REF: GABORONE 3132

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: GOB HAS ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR BUILDING AN
AGRICULTURAL RESIDENTIAL CENTER FOR SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT
REFUGEES. HOWEVER, IT APPEARS TO US THAT PROJECT IS NOT YET
OFF THE GROUND AND WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT ANNOUNCEMENT WAS
INTENDED, IN LARGE PART, TO INFLUENCE URBANIZED SOWETO STUDENTS
TO LEAVE BOTSWANA FOR SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL TRAINING IN NIGERIA.
END SUMMARY

2. RADIO BOTSWANA OF DEC 15 AND BOTSWANA DAILY NEWS OF DEC
19, 1977, GAVE ANNOUNCEMENT FROM OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
THAT PLANS ARE UNDERWAY FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF "A RESIDENTIAL
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CENTRE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN STUDENT REFUGEES" LOCATED IN VILLAGE
OF MOSETSANAMONTLE IN THE KWENENG DISTRICT. ANNOUNCEMENT SAID
THAT REFUGEES WOULD BE GIVEN OPPORTUNITY TO DEVELOP HORTICULTURAL
AND AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITIES, INITIALLY UNDER SUPERVISION OF
PROFESSIONAL AGRICULTURALISTS. IT WAS HOPED THAT CENTER COULD
OFFER TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONSTRUCTION AND ALLIED
TRADES, ALL WITH A VIEW TO ENABLING THE REFUGEES TO ACQUIRE

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN BOTSWANA OR OVERSEAS.

3. IN CONVERSATION WITH UNHCR RESREP PERKINS AND HIS DEPUTY, MCCALLIN, EMBOFF WAS TOLD THAT GOB HAD MADE BASIC POLITICAL DECISION TO GET THE REFUGEES OUT OF GABORONE. NEVERTHELESS, REFUGEE CENTER WOULD NOT HAVE ANY PUNITIVE OR REHABILITATIVE PURPOSE, AND WOULD GO FAR BEYOND ANSWERING THE POPULAR CLAMOR FOR SIMPLY GETTING REFUGEES OFF THE STREETS. STUDENTS WOULD BE ORGANIZED ALONG TEACHING AND WORKING LINES OF BRIGADE SELF-HELP SYSTEM FATHERED IN BOTSWANA BY WHITE SOUTH AFRICAN EXPATRIATE PATRICK VAN RENSBERG. PROJECT WOULD KEEP STUDENTS' MINDS ACTIVE SO THEY COULD SUCCESSFULLY ENTER THE TWO SECONDARY SCHOOLS PLANNED FOR COMPLETION HERE TWO YEARS HENCE. PERKINS HIMSELF HAD INSPECTED THE MOSETSANAMONTLE AREA (ABOUT 75 KILOMETERS NW OF MOLEPOLOLE) AND COULD CONFIRM THAT IT WAS A FERTILE VALLEY, NOT KALAHARI WASTE.

4. PERKINS TOLD EMBOFF THAT UNHCR FUNDS WERE ENVISAGED FOR BUILDING AND EXPANSION OF CENTER AS LONG AS IT DEVELOPED ALONG CONSTRUCTIVE LINES OUTLINED PARA 3 (AS OPPOSED TO PUNITIVE LINES). HOWEVER, HE ADMITTED THAT GOB WAS NOT YET PUSHING THE PROJECT AND PLANS WERE NOT AS FIRM AS THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT INDICATED.

5. WHEN ASKED WHETHER TIMING OF ANNOUNCEMENT WAS NOT CHOSEN TO COINCIDE WITH VISIT TO GABORONE OF NIGERIAN GOVERNMENT TEAM RECRUITING SOWETO REFUGEES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOL TRAINING IN CONFIDENTIAL

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NIGERIA, MCCALLIN ASKED EMBOFF "WHAT DO YOU THINK?" AND OWNED UP TO HAVING HIMSELF PUSHED FOR RELEASE OF SUCH AN ANNOUNCEMENT AT THIS TIME TO GIVE THE NIGERIAN SCHOOL RECRUITERS A HELPING HAND, I.E. "GETTING STUDENTS TO MAKE UP THEIR MINDS". MCCALLIN SAID RECRUITERS TOLD HIM DEC 17 ON EVE OF THEIR DEPARTURE FROM BOTSWANA, THAT 200 STUDENTS HAD SHOWN UP FOR INTERVIEWS (AN ENTHUSIASTIC CONTRAST TO MEAGRE RECEPTION ACCORDED THE GHANAIA RECRUITERS REPORTED REFTEL). TEAM WOULD NOW RETURN TO NIGERIA TO EVALUATE RESULTS, FIND HOW MANY OPENINGS ACTUALLY EXISTED, AND MAKE CHOICES.

6. COMMENT: WITH ITS LIMITED RESOURCES, ITS CITIZENRY UP IN ARMS AGAINST REFUGEES, AND FEARS THAT FACILITIES OFFERED TO REFUGEES ONLY SUCCEED IN ATTRACTING MORE OF THEM, THE GOB, UNDERSTANDABLY, HAS USUALLY BEEN RELUCTANT TO BUILD ANYTHING OF A PERMANENT NATURE FOR REFUGEES IN BOTSWANA. FOR THIS REASON, WE GIVE GREAT WEIGHT TO PERKINS' ADMISSION (PARA 4) THAT, IN EFFECT, REFUGEE CENTER PROJECT IS NOT OFF THE GROUND.

7. TOO, WE CONCLUDE THAT THIS PREMATURE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A PROJECT STILL AT CONCEPTUAL STAGE WAS AIMED PRIMARILY AT INFLUENCING URBANIZED SOWETO STUDENTS TO SIGN UP WITH NIGERIANS AND

TO LEAVE BOTSWANA IN ORDER TO AVOID ENFORCED AGRICULTURAL-MECHANICAL TRAINING IN WHAT UNDOUBTEDLY APPEARS TO MANY AS A KALAHARI DESERT SETTING. THUS, AS NOTED REFTL, GOB IS ACTING FORCEFULLY TO DECREASE UNPOPULAR AND UNSUPPORTABLE REFUGEE BURDEN.

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Message Attributes

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